

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 /050 W
-----114199 201139Z /11
O 201126Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO USICA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0438

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USICA

STATE PASS WHITE HOUSE FOR JODY POWELL, STATE FOR EUR/CE

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT TO THE FEDERAL
REPUBLIC: FIRST BEHIND THE HEADLINES
ASSESSMENT

REF: BONN 13156-C

1. THIS SUMMARY REPORT IS WRITTEN AT MR. POWELL'S REQUEST. REVIEW OF PRESS, TV REPORTING AND COMMENTARIES WERE FILED REGULARLY.
2. IT IS AN ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT AND REACTION OF A SUBJECTIVE NATURE, BASED ON CONVERSATIONS WITH MANY GERMANS HERE IN BONN, IN FRANKFURT AND BERLIN.
3. CARTER THE PERSON:

A) GERMANS NOW HAVE A PERSONALIZED IMAGE OF THE PRESIDENT AND IT IS A GOOD ONE. YOUNG PEOPLE HAD THEIR IMPRESSION OF THE PRESIDENT FAVORABLY CHANGED. HOW
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MANY IS HARD TO SAY BUT IT IS A BIG STEP FORWARD IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. THE LEAD POINT OF THE BREAKTHROUGH WAS THE CONGRESS HALL MEETING (BERLIN), DESCRIBED AS AN "EYE OPENER". THE PRESIDENT WAS NOT THE UNDECISIVE PERSON DESCRIBED BY US AND GERMAN MEDIA.

B) A NEW PICTURE HAS EMERGED OF A PERSON WHO PROJECTS

BOTH WISDOM AND KINDLINESS, AMAN WITH MATURITY INSTEAD OF NAIVITE. THE KINDLINESS ASPECT HAD ITS SHARPEST FOCUS IN THOSE FEW SECONDS WHEN THE PRESIDENT EMBRACED THE LADY IN THE WHEELCHAIR, AND THE EXPRESSION ON HIS FACE WHEN THE OLD LADY FROM EAST GERMANY ASKED THE QUESTION IN A QUAVERING VOICE. MANY COMMENTED SPECIFICALLY THAT THEY HAD BEEN EMOTIONALLY MOVED. JOURNALISTS AND ORDINARY MORTALS CONFESSED SURPRISE AT THE PRESIDENT'S WARMTH: "IT IS NOT A POSE - HE REALLY IS FRIENDLY." A STUDENT AT THE BONN MARKET PLACE WHO FAIRLY LOUDLY WAS DECLARING "THIS SHOW IS A LOT OF BULL" (STRONGER WORD USED) WAS ASKED AFTER THE PRESIDENT DROVE OFF WHAT HIS VIEW WAS SAID "IT STILL IS A LOT OF BULL BUT JIMMY IS OK."

C) THE KEY TO THE BREAKTHROUGH - AND IT WAS A BREAK-THROUGH - WAS THE TOWN MEETING. JOURNALISTS AND OFFICIALS ALIKE WHO HAD BEEN WORRIED STIFF ABOUT A BOOBOO IN THE Q AND A NOT ONLY WERE HIGH IN THEIR PRAISE BUT EVEN ADMITTED THEY HAD BEEN WRONG ALTHOUGH IT MUST BE ADDED SUCH CONFESSIONS HAVE NOT BEEN HEARD LOUDLY IN PUBLIC. SEVERAL COMMENTED THAT NO GERMAN POLITICIAN WOULD TAKE SUCH A RISK AND THEY TOOK THEIR HATS OFF TO THE PRESIDENT. ALL SAID HIS PERFORMANCE HAD BEEN AN OVERWHELMING SUCCESS. THE IMPACT QUESTION ON THE YOUNG WAS THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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"I DON'T KNOW" ANSWER TO THE WALL QUESTION. "AT LAST SOMEONE WHO HAS THE MANLINESS (OTHER WORD USED) TO GIVE

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A STRAIGHTFORWARD ANSWER" WAS AN OBSERVATION.

4. IN THE POLITICAL AREA, THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT
CAN BEST BE ILLUSTRATED BY THIS BOILDOWN OF MANY
CONVERSATIONS:

"WHAT DO YOU THINK THE CARTER VISIT ACCOMPLISHED?"
"IT STRENGTHENED CONFIDENCE IN THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE
AND NATO." "WHY?" "HE SHOWED BY GOING THROUGH
QUESTIONING, LIKE AT THE TOWN MEETING, WITHOUT MISTAKES,
THAT HE REALLY KNOWS THE ANGLES." ANOTHER CONCLUSION:
"BERLIN IS IN GOOD HANDS." MORE GENERALLY, WHAT THE
PRESIDENT SAID ABOUT COMMITMENT TO NATO, TO BERLIN
AND REUNIFICATION REGISTERED. WHILE THERE ALSO IS
THE "WAIT AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS NOW" ATTITUDE THERE IS
SATISFACTION, PERHAPS EVEN PRIDE, THAT MR. CARTER
RECEIVED A RECEPTION THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
SHOULD GET. A REMARK: "THE VISIT BROUGHT HIM OUT OF
SOME KIND OF A SHADOW."

5. A NEW TWIST IS SYMPATHY FOR THE PRESIDENT'S TROUBLES
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WITH THE CONGRESS. WHY THIS IS SO FOR THE MOMENT IS
DIFFICULT TO DISCERN, BUT SEEMS TO BE A FACT. WE HAVE
BEEN ELABORATING WITH OUR AUDIENCES ON LEGISLATIVE-
EXECUTIVE RELATIONS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AS WELL AS
IN TERMS OF THE PRESENT SITUATION FOR SOME TIME, BUT
SOMETHING HAPPENED DURING THE VISIT TO PUNCH THIS
THROUGH.

6. YOUNG PEOPLE: IN BERLIN THERE WAS CONCERN THAT
WHILE THE ELDER GENERATION WHICH EXPERIENCED THE AIRLIFT
AND SO ON WOULD TURN OUT, THE YOUNGER
PEOPLE WOULD NOT. WHILE NO STATISTICS ON THIS CAN BE
DEVELOPED, CONSENSUS OF OBSERVERS IS THAT MAJORITY OF
SOME QUARTER MILLION BERLINERS LINED UP ALONG THE
MOTORCADE ROUTES BELONGED TO THE POSTWAR GENERATION.
ANOTHER EXAMPLE: THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE IN THE BONN
MARKET SQUARE WERE YOUNG. GENERAL CONCLUSION: WHATEVER

ITS MOTIVATION, THE "SUCCESSOR GENERATION" TURNED OUT.

7. THERE WAS A SIGNAL ABSENCE OF NEGATIVE COMMENT ABOUT THE PRESIDENT. THERE WAS CAVILLING ABOUT AMY IN SOME OF THE MEDIA, NOTEABLY FROM LEFT-ORIENTED TYPES, WHO MUTTERED DARKLY ABOUT EXPLOITING A CHILD. MOREOVER, EVEN IN THIS CASE FAVORABLE OBSERVATION OUTWEIGHED THE NEGATIVE. MRS. CARTER SCORED POSITIVELY ALL AROUND, COMING OUT AS A NATURAL, CHARMING AND VERY FRIENDLY PERSON. THE RHEINLAND EQUIVALENT OF "SHE'S A REAL DOLL" SUMS UP THE LINZ VISIT.

8. BALANCE SHEET: SO FAR, AT LEAST, ALL IN THE BLACK. IT REALLY WAS A BREAKTHROUGH. PERHAPS BEST SUMMARY IS WHAT ONE PERSON, WHO HERETOFORE HAD BEEN VERY CYNICAL ABOUT OUR PRESIDENT, SAID: "NOW I'M LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND WHY AMERICANS VOTED FOR CARTER." KLIEFORTH

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Message Attributes

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